5: Pollard M-5 (no date) 1921 AE4 Lolo AE4

713 aside the missiles it struck me that I could do that. I asked
726 them to try me. Being their guest, they were loath to do so, but at last were persuaded. As the clods came to me, instead of knocking them aside I treated them as if one were fielding a cricket ball, and returned them home as quickly as one could. I fancy one of our smart wicket-keepers with a good pair of gloves on would have given these people a surprise. As it was they thought the catching of the missiles was wonderful, and stories went about that nine men at once throwing at the foreigner were unable to hit him. I am glad they never put their belief to the test.

526 While we were watching the fighters several horses were
496 brought for sale. One of the friends of Mr Long wished to buy a few horses, and we had a good bit of excitement as these horses were being tried. Just below the farmhouse of See-tieh there was a kind of race-course, oval in shape, where the young men constantly gallop their horses. These men are the most expert riders I have ever seen in China. Often they ride bareback at a tremendous pace, and often on a very hard black hide saddle. I was very much interested in the stirrup, which was a heavy wooden kind of shoe polished black. It looked almost as big and clumsy as a cowboy's stirrup. Here again I noticed that the Nosu do not follow the Chinese ways, but have a way of their own. They always ride toes in the stirrup, like Westerners, and not heels in, as do most Chinese. There is something to be said in favour of the Chinese method. The roads in West China are so rough, and there is constant danger of the horse slipping, so that heels in has some advantage over toes in. If the horse falls the rider can jump clear, and so save an awkward accident. I always rode toes in until one day my mule went down

5: Pollard M-5 (no date) 1921 AE4 Lolo AE4

and I was caught with foot in stirrup unable to extricate myself. After that escape I learned the Chinese style, and now on the rare occasions when my horse slips I can usually clear myself easily. I have seen one or two nasty accidents which might have been avoided if the riders had followed the Chinese method. Of course when it comes to racing the heels are no match for the toes, although on a decent stretch of road, even with heels in, on a good pony one can ride at a very fast pace.

The finest Nosu rider I ever saw was a lame man, who got about with the help of a long stick. On his legs he was very slow and clumsy, but put him on a horse which had any mettle in it and the lame man was transformed. When urging the horse to its fastest he would stretch his legs up almost level with the horse's neck and lean backwards as far as possible, and then away like the lightning. He would ride the wildest horse in this way, and could break in the roughest of Nosu or Chinese bronchos.

The prices asked for the horses brought for our inspection were very reasonable. Ten ounces of silver, worth then about thirty shillings, was the price of the best pony brought there. I got hold of a black-and-white one which rendered me magnificent service for some years. It would take me up and down the hills in my district without ever a mishap. When starting off on a journey which he had been before, I could throw the reins over his neck, take out my book or newspaper and read for hours together. One had just now and again to look at the road and to give an occasional word to the pony. He would face anything I put him to, and had not the

5: Pollard M-5 (no date) 1921 AE4 Lolo AE4

CHAPTER XXVI

BACK INTO THE DANGER ZONE

ONE evening while we were staying at the friendly widow's home the weather cleared up beautifully, and the moon shone out in all its full glory. This tempted everybody away from the dark room and the fire, and we all adjourned to the courtyard, from which could be seen the snow hills, with their white sides shining in the clear moonlight.

The young people started a wrestling match, Nosuland v. Yunnan. Each person going to take part in the contest tied a girdle around his waist. The antagonists, bending down, caught hold of each other's girdles and manœuvred until one or other got a fair throw on to the back. The men who had come across from Yunnan were no match for the Nosu. The fun was very exciting, and the young men entered into it heartily. The Yunnan men did not take their beating very gracefully. Then hopping and skipping were tried, and, being raw at these, the Nosu were nowhere. Then one of the Yunnan men, wishing to recover the ashes, proposed a trial at fist-striking. Each held out a fist, and in turns the pair of combatants struck each other's fist. Here the Yunnan man held his own, and at last, before his heavy blows, the Nosu champion winced and interposed his hide arm-protector. This was held equivalent to defeat, and now it was the hillmen who were not pleased at the turn of affairs. I think they would like to have gone a step

5: Pollard M-5 (no date) 1921 AE4 Lolo AE4

574 farther, for they are always on the look out for a fight. In
526 fact, the whole race of Nosu in this independent land seem a race of born fighters. The sight of a gun will set them all in a quiver of excitement. They closely examine it, pass it from one to another, and then want to fire it off. They do not see why you should possess fine guns if you do not intend to use them. In that they are like many present-day Europeans.

574 While the young men were engaged at their sports, the stars shone down on us beautifully. The house faced the west. Jupiter was in his full glory, and away to the north the Great Bear was faithfully keeping watch over this land where bears are so common. By-and-by the sports came to an end, and we went into the house again and to bed. We were due to rise early the next morn, as we had an important stage to do and we wanted to start before it became late.

We rose up at cock-crow, long before it was daylight. We were all excited, for this day we were going down to the Yangtse again, and were to run the risk of a struggle with the Lai-lai and Sha-ma clans. When we first got up the skies were still clear, and Venus in the east was shining very brilliantly. This brightness, however, did not last long, and before we started on our journey, mist reigned supreme on all sides. One of the women brought in a supply of large buck-wheat cakes for our use on the road. These cakes were one and a half inches thick, and I got half of one as my share for the day. The cakes of some of the others were more than three inches thick. There was in these cakes a real solid breakfast and dinner for us all.

After the sharing out of the cakes we said good-bye to all